

## Last Days of Persecution 153

The overthrow of Maxentius by Constantino, the destruction of Maximin by Licinius, the publication of the Edict of Milan, and the apparent sincerity of the two Emperors in their anxiety to restore peace and security, were naturally hailed by the Christians throughout the Empire with the liveliest joy. On every side stately churches began to rise from the ground, and as the triumph of Christianity over its enemies was incontestable, converts came flocking in by the thousand to receive what Eusebius calls "the mysterious signs of the Saviour's Passion." The only troublers of the Church were members of the Church herself, like the extravagant Donatists in Africa. The canons of the Council of Ancyra, which was held soon after the death of Maximin, shew how the ecclesiastical authorities imposed varying penances upon those who had shrunk from their duty as soldiers of Christ in the recent persecution, varying, that is to say, according to the extent of their shortcomings. Some had apostatised and themselves turned persecutors; some had sacrificed at the first command; some had endured prison, but had shrunk from torture; some had suffered torture, but quailed before the stake; some had bribed the executioners only to make a show of torturing them; some had attended the sacrificial feasts, but had substituted other meats. The punishments range from ten years of probation and every degree of penance, down to a few months' deprivation of the comforts and communions of the Church.

New dangers, however, speedily threatened, Constantine and Licinius quarrelled between themselves